

City of St. Cloud

2016-2017 Economic Development Marketing Plan

AGENCY **128**

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Executive Summary

The EDA's primary goal is to **foster growth and success within the local business community and attract new business to the City of St. Cloud**. In 2015, the St. Cloud > GREATER campaign was launched and has been gaining momentum. We recommend continuing with the St. Cloud > GREATER campaign in 2016 to capitalize on its momentum and growing presence locally and throughout the state.



**ST.CLOUD
GREATER**

In support of the City's overall goals, in 2016, we recommend marketing strategy support the following two key objectives:

- 1) **Local & Regional Business Growth & Success**
- 2) **Community Marketing Support for Business Recruitment**

St. Cloud has a strong presence in a variety of market verticals and we recommend efforts be targeted at the following sectors:

- 1) Advanced Manufacturing
- 2) Business & Financial Services
- 3) Healthcare
- 4) Distribution
- 5) Small Businesses

Objective 1) Local & Regional Business Development

St. Cloud > GREATER campaigns should be targeted at key influencers in the following audiences in the city of St. Cloud and greater Mpls/St. Paul area. We selected these audiences as they have a pulse on the business market and are an influence with business owners on selecting locations for start-ups, expansions and relocations. These are the people we want familiar with the St. Cloud > GREATER message to drive new business growth within and to St. Cloud.

Key Influencers/Audience:

- Bankers
- Commercial Real Estate Brokers/Tenant Representatives
- Developers
- Site Selectors
- Builders
- State of MN DEED

Marketing Strategy:

The best way to reach these audiences is to be where they are. They get their information from their professional networks, organizations such as MN Real Estate Journal (MREJ), publications including Enterprise MN magazine, Finance & Commerce newspaper, Minneapolis / St. Paul Business Journal, etc. and from online sources (events, social media, web sites, emails, etc.).

With a limited budget, we recommend engaging in the following market tactics to reach as many of the key audiences as possible, while reinforcing the St. Cloud > GREATER message through multiple touch points.

Marketing Tactics:

- Strategic Partnerships
 - MN Real Estate Journal (MREJ)
 - Greater St. Cloud Development Corporation (GSDC)
 - Other targeted organizations
- Event Marketing
 - MREJ Land Conference
 - MREJ Industrial Real Estate Conference
 - St. Cloud Real Estate Summit
 - St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce Chamber Connection
- Content Delivery & Continuity Programs
 - E-Newsletters
 - City of St. Cloud Website
- Thought Leadership
 - Social Media Strategy & Content Plan
 - LinkedIn Business Articles
- Advertising & Editorial Content in Business/Real Estate Publications (Paid Media)
- Public Relations (Earned Media)
- St. Cloud > GREATER Branding
 - St. Cloud >GREATER proposal template
 - GREATER promotional tools

Measurement:

Increased Inquires - Success will be measured by number of inquiries made by potential new businesses. The goal is 37-38 inquiries per quarter; 150 total in 2016.

Followers on LinkedIn – Today there are 64 followers on the City of St. Cloud business LinkedIn page. Mid-term goal is to increase followers on LinkedIn to 500.

Open Rates – Goal is to have a 20% open rate for the monthly e-newsletter and increase subscribers to 500.

Brand Awareness – Additionally, a soft metric will be increased brand awareness by the real estate/economic development communities of the St. Cloud > GREATER campaign which can be calculated by a survey at the start of the year and end of the year or at the MREJ event each year.

Business Development Budget:

(Please reference budget spreadsheet for detail)

• MN Real Estate Journal Sponsorship	\$15,000
• Event Marketing	\$ 2,000
• Content Delivery	\$ 1,430
• Thought Leadership	\$ 2,525
• Creative Development	\$ 3,410
• Advertising & Editorial Content (Paid Media)	\$ 7,268
• Public Relations (Earned Media)	\$11,440
• Continuity Efforts	\$ 8,640
	Total: \$51,713

Objective 2) Recruitment Support for St. Cloud Businesses

Unemployment rates are low for the City of St. Cloud, which is both good news and challenging news. It means residents are able to support the businesses in their community financially. But, it also leads to challenges for businesses in finding qualified, talented employees. Although businesses are actively recruiting and demonstrating why a potential employee would want to work for them, they could use the City's help in promoting why a potential employee would want to live/work in St. Cloud. Providing recruitment support is key to keeping businesses viable as well as growing the brand awareness of St. Cloud > GREATER.

Key Audiences:

Key audiences are potential employees who do not currently work in St. Cloud. They include:

- Local Commuters
- Surrounding Colleges Current Students
- Surrounding Colleges & High Schools Recent Grads
- Northwest Metro commuters (secondary)

Marketing Strategy:

The strategy is to develop messaging and tools to support what makes St. Cloud > GREATER and raise awareness of why St. Cloud is a great place to live and

work. This will be leveraged in touchpoints that reach the defined target audience.

Marketing Tactics:

- Recruitment brochure about living/working in St. Cloud. This would be a printed hard copy that local businesses could use in recruitment efforts along with PDFs that can be emailed with offers to potential employees or posted on business websites.
- Social media content plan. This will be a plan focused towards consumers/employees and be leveraged as a guide for content development by DAYTA. It will tie in other marketing efforts along with recruiting efforts to make social posts more aligned with overall St. Cloud > GREATER campaign efforts.
- Social Media posts on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest
- Social Advertising – TBD (included in DAYTA’s program)

Measurement:

Friends, Tweets and Pins – Today there are (need info from DAYTA Marketing):

- 2,467 Facebook Followers. Goal is X
- 1,275 Twitter Followers. Goal is X
- 199 Pinterest Followers. Goal is X

Business Feedback - Another soft metric will be hearing from local businesses that the recruiting support efforts led to attracting more qualified workers meeting business recruiting needs.

Budget:

(Please reference budget spreadsheet for detail)

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| • Recruitment strategy & tool development | \$ 8,850 |
| • Social Media Content Plan | \$ 255 |
| • Social Media Monthly Posts (DAYTA Marketing)
(\$650/month – includes boosts & advertising) | \$ 7,800 |
| • Paid recruitment placements | \$ 4,178 |
| | Total: \$21,083 |

(For complete details on the 2016-2017 Marketing Plan see pages 7 – 30.)

Situation Analysis

Building Brand Awareness

The City of St. Cloud has **made great strides in launching and establishing a foothold for the St. Cloud > GREATER brand over the past 12 months.** During this time, the St. Cloud GREATER brand has been a topic of conversation by all constituencies in the media, is visible in the local business and residential communities and has come to life in multiple media, from out-of-home applications and promotion specialties, to print and video to social media and editorial coverage. What's more, the ever important work of connecting Cathy Mehelich and the EDA team to key business development influencers to build awareness of St. Cloud's key strengths and opportunities made an important leap forward in 2015.

But one year into branding efforts, our work has only just begun. A brand is not built in a day. **The single most important factor in building brand recognition is to promote a consistent message with continued repetition over a sustained period of time in a variety of media.** But in the business of economic development, establishing trusted relationships with business development influencers by maintaining a physical presence in their world is still the most important thing we can do to establish credibility and awareness. Achieving an optimal balance between in-person relationship building and comprehensive media support within a limited budget will continue to be our greatest opportunity.

As St. Cloud GREATER's impact continues to grow, some additional challenges have emerged that warrant our attention in order to continue progress and help our City succeed. The EDA's primary goal is to foster growth and success within our local business community and attract new business to our City. One key component to achieving that success is to ensure these businesses have all the tools they need to support their growth – including qualified employees. While growth potential is apparent in our businesses, they are experiencing significant challenges finding the qualified talent they need to pursue their growth goals. St. Cloud's unemployment rate of 4.8% is lower than the national average. According to the June 2015 St. Cloud Quarterly Business Report, more than 37 percent of businesses in St. Cloud reported worker shortages and 35% expect the trend to continue through 2015 and into 2016. The "pool" of qualified workers to draw from is not large enough to support the employment needs of our local business community. With that in mind, the EDA needs to dedicate some targeted resources to providing tools to market the City to help local businesses recruit qualified employees.

Scope, Objectives & Expected Outcomes

Scope

The scope of this marketing plan covers marketing strategies and tactics to drive business growth and expansion as well as support recruitment in local business.

Objectives

Our objectives are threefold:

- I. Local Business Development – continue to build awareness of the City’s capabilities, connections and position it as the primary resource and first stop/one-stop-shop for guidance and support in starting, growing and expanding business in St. Cloud.
- II. Regional Business Development – continue to build awareness of and credibility of St. Cloud as a viable option for business start-ups, expansion and/relocation.
- III. Local Recruitment – position and promote St. Cloud as a preferred place to live and work and collaborate with area partners and local business to develop tools that market the community in support of business recruiting efforts.

While a business focus remains our primary objective, unlike last year, a portion of this 2016-17 marketing plan also needs to address constituencies beyond business to support recruiting needs in the business community. This could include outreach to tourism, residential and higher education constituencies in pursuit of that goal. The City will still look to partners to strengthen general branding in the tourism, residential and higher education constituencies; however, they will be directly engaged in our efforts this year to the degree that they support the recruitment strategy objectives.

Outcomes

The expected outcomes of our strategic marketing strategies are:

- I. Increased business prospects/inquiries, both in quantity and quality of leads that can be pursued. 2016 goal is 160 inquires total. See [Appendix B](#) for historical data.
- II. Success in attracting more qualified workers to support business recruiting needs.

The effectiveness of the business development (increased inquiries) strategy will be measured through EDA team quantitative feedback, website analytics and customer relationship management tools such as Salesforce.com. The impact of the recruitment strategy will be measured by feedback from businesses regarding progress in the number of qualified candidates applying for open positions and the length of time it takes to fill open positions.

Focus and Messaging

Focus

Our primary focus remains using the St. Cloud > GREATER brand to continue to raise awareness of St. Cloud as a viable and high-potential locale for prospective business ventures. In a recent survey of the participants in the first-ever St. Cloud Real Estate Development Summit, almost 90% of survey respondents had some level of awareness of St. Cloud and its potential, but more than 2/3 of respondents were only “somewhat aware”. This suggests a need for further education and sustained consistency in our branding efforts, as influencers in our target audiences today may still not regularly include St. Cloud on their short list of viable development locations. They are either unaware of the City’s assets, vast resources and potential or have limited knowledge of the City or may have outdated perceptions about what St. Cloud has to offer.

Messaging Data Point Support

St. Cloud, in fact, offers precisely what our target audiences are looking for and more, with documented successes to support a position as a viable potential business locale and a great place to live and work for our workforce. These are the cornerstones of the messaging that will be used to reach target audiences in 2016:

- The City has attracted the attention of national organizations and business media— including, Forbes, Fortune, AARP, Reader’s Digest and the Milken Institute— as a top location nationally live and do business based on a combination of factors including community quality, education, workforce quality, wage competitiveness, economic climate, accessibility, healthcare and more. Note: While it is important to use examples of the recognition we have gotten, what is most important (and what makes *purposeful content*) is to spell out why we have been recognized for this.
- Prime (and affordable) available space and land, a proximate supplier network, collaborative resources in support of business growth as well as the aesthetics of the community all provide compelling reasons why St. Cloud is a preferred location for business. Thriving international corporations, including Canadian bus manufacturer New Flyer and German farm implement manufacturer, Geringhoff, have selected St. Cloud over other U.S. locations for expansion for these reasons.
- St. Cloud has land that is substantially more affordable (in some cases half the price) as compared to Northwest Metro communities. St. Cloud has two premier business parks with Shovel-Ready Certified sites and more than a dozen resources to assist businesses in establishing a business or to retain, grow and expand existing business, all within an hour’s drive of the Minneapolis metro area.

- An abundance of entrepreneurial success and a leading communication infrastructure has spawned hometown growth of numerous technology companies, such as Marco, Microbiologics and NetGain, [and](#) Geo-Com.
- St. Cloud has a diverse and proximate supplier network that enables maximum productivity and efficient business operations.
- The City is comprised of a diverse mixture of labor industries, ranging from healthcare to manufacturing, earning St. Cloud a spot on the Top 100 Best Places to Live and Launch a Business by Fortune Magazine.
- A university and college population of over 30,000 students provides one of the state's largest and most educated workforces.
- St. Cloud is home to one of only four Minnesota educational institutions awarded a U.S. Department of Labor grant in 2012 for advanced manufacturing education programs to train for high-skill jobs.
- St. Cloud's Downtown is a regional and technology hub, making the city easy to get to, easy to stay connected within and easy/affordable to do business in. It also serves as the heart of the community for culture, quaint shopping and entertainment. A revitalized downtown business area has experienced a 25% increase in employment, 66% increase in retail and 68% increase in dining establishments.
- St. Cloud has good jobs and is a great place to live and raise a family. In a recent [study by Pew Research](#), nearly half (44%) of recent college graduates were working in jobs that didn't require a college degree. There are opportunities to change that in St. Cloud, where career growth is not only possible, it's an opportunity ready to be seized right now. And, with a lively downtown, ample shopping and entertainment, affordable housing and a school district that is investing in fostering advanced achievement and new facilities, it's also a great place to live and start a family. This will resonate strongly with the 22 – 27 age group.

Key Potential Verticals

In an effort to make the best use of limited budget dollars, we recommend that business target market messaging focus on key vertical market segments that the City and its assets are best positioned to attract and support success in both locally and regionally.

I. Advanced Manufacturing

St. Cloud has an abundant, skilled, competitive wage workforce. We are close to the Metro area and have a dynamic supplier network close at hand.

II. Business Services / Financial Services

As a college/university town, St. Cloud is home to a vast educated and competitive-wage workforce of young millennials. Many high-potential sites are available, including a vibrant downtown work environment with many key amenities, such as restaurants, boutiques, arts/entertainment venues and recreation opportunities nearby. Innovation thrives in the City.

III. Distribution

St. Cloud is located centrally in the state, in close proximity to the Twin Cities metro area and adjacent to major thoroughfares enabling easy and convenient transportation access in every direction. The City has large buildings and land sites available and a large competitive-wage workforce.

IV. Small Business

St. Cloud has a thriving small business community of over 1,400 establishments. Multiple resources including a 5-Star Certified Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Council, Small Business Development Center, SCORE, MN Business Finance Corp., college/university and active community banking institutions support start-up entrepreneurs and growing businesses.

V. Healthcare

St. Cloud is home to the largest healthcare network in the region. Healthcare remains the largest sector of strength and City's largest employer, employing more than 18,000 people in the St. Cloud MSA. The diverse variety of services offered, quality of care and positive patient reviews are a few of the reasons why St. Cloud Hospital was named one of the nation's "100 Great Community Hospitals" by Becker's Hospital Review in 2014.

Target Audience

Business Development

While many businesses and budding entrepreneurs conduct efforts of due diligence on their own, they often turn to a few key resources to help them explore locations and find sites for their new or expanding businesses. These influencers continue to be the primary targets of marketing efforts for the City.

- I. Local: (internal) – within the City of St. Cloud
 - o Bankers
 - o Commercial Real Estate Brokers
 - o Builders
 - o Other local businesses

While this audience might be looking for assistance for starts-ups or expansion, they are also on the pulse of potential expanding or new business activity coming into the area. They serve as mentors and trusted contacts and are an important source to make referrals to the City in addition to being prospects themselves as business owners. Since the City's Economic Development team is relatively new, awareness of its capabilities, resources and connections that can be used by local businesses to start up or expand is relatively low. The primary objective in marketing efforts targeted to these influencers will be to raise awareness of the City's capabilities and to establish them as the first stop in planning for business growth.

- II. Regional: (external) – Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area; State of MN DEED
 - o Commercial Real Estate Brokers/Tenant Representatives
 - o Developers
 - o Site Selectors

The regional influencer audience is often directed by clients to focus on opportunities closer to the metro first and is largely unaware of the specifics of St. Cloud as a viable market. While we are recognized as a sizable city in the state, a lack of understanding still exists about the city's workforce potential, viable site feasibility/availability and accessibility. Most don't realize that in the time it takes to drive from the southern suburbs to the northwest portion of the Twin Cities, the potential employee, supplier or customer could drive from Minneapolis to St. Cloud; with fewer traffic headaches. Marketing efforts need to be focused on raising awareness of St. Cloud as a viable market and to help support the Economic Development team in building the exposure and relationships needed to sustain long-term partnerships with these influencers.

Recruitment

The city's unemployment rate is relatively low, suggesting that most residents within the community that wish to work already are. With that in mind, the City must broaden the scope of their recruitment support efforts to target qualified workers who are not yet working here, promoting the City's residential and professional benefits and educating them on the quality of life and employment potential of the community to inspire them to come to live and work here. Recent GSDC Coffee & Careers sessions confirm that there is also a sizable portion of the existing workforce within the city that is underemployed. As these candidates move into positions better suited for them, their existing positions will become vacant, and workforce and available position dynamics will shift. Thus, additional support will be needed in the near future for the entry-level positions eventually vacated by workforce progress, requiring us once again to draw upon broader geographic audiences to fill the voids. While suggested partnerships (see recommended strategies below) will enable us to find out more specifics on types of workers that are in greatest demand, three obvious general audiences come to mind as priority targets for the "live here; work here" messaging.

1. Resident Commuters – According to the recent City of St. Cloud Comprehensive Plan, 13,000 residents that live in the St. Cloud area travel outside of St. Cloud to work each day. 25% drive more than 25 miles and 1 in 5 drive more than 50 miles daily. We need to raise awareness that well paying jobs with good benefits and growth potential in some of the Midwest's highest potential businesses exist right in their own backyard.
2. Current Local College Students – more than 30,000 students attend the St. Cloud area's institutions of higher learning. They represent an educated workforce, actively seeking employment while they are in college and a career once they graduate. College students generally begin looking for jobs in their field of study and plan their first stop after college well before their senior year. We recommend targeting college juniors and seniors for our recruitment strategy. Primary candidates would be aged 19/20 - 22.
3. Area High School & College Alumni – recent college graduates looking for careers or working in their first jobs as well as area high school graduates who went on to college elsewhere and are set to graduate are also prime candidates and are young enough to not yet be settled and established in their existing work locales.
 - Local high school alumni: Research shows that almost half of students move back home after graduating from college. For this reason, targeting

students who graduated St. Cloud high schools in the past 3-5 years but moved out of the area to attend college would be a viable target audience to promote moving back to our area to start their careers once they graduate. These are young area alumni aged 22 – 25.

- St. Cloud Area college alumni –Research also shows that 60% of college graduates plan to stay in their first jobs for 2 years or less. So, students that graduated from St. Cloud area post-secondary schools in the past 3-5 years (even if they moved away after college and work elsewhere today) are an important segment to reach for our recruitment strategy. These are primarily young adults aged 22 – 27.
4. Northwest Metro Commuters – are another audience that should be considered at a later date and added in as budget allows. These are people who live in the northwest metro and are likely traveling into the heart of the Twin Cities to work. This audience would be viable prospects for promoting St. Cloud as a high potential place for a career with less of a commute headache.

Approach, Recommended Strategies & Budget: Business Development & St. Cloud > GREATER Brand

Business development relies on strong individual relationships fueled by trust and confidence to be successful. With a limited budget and much ground to cover, City Leadership will need to spend the critical next several years with “boots on the ground,” personally in the market establishing connections not only with key influencers locally and regionally, but also in building key partner relationships to make limited dollars reach farther. Essentially, we will need to use human resources to build the presence and relationships and finite financial resources to create professional materials and brand support for their efforts. The highest priority marketing strategies are those that support establishing needed awareness, and making a memorable, captivating and professional impression.

Recommended Strategies & Budget

1. Strategic Partnerships

- **MN Real Estate Journal (MREJ) Strategic Partnership**

Budget: MREJ Sponsorship = \$15,000

More than 15,000 decision-makers read the Minnesota Real Estate Journal and more than 22,000 industry stakeholders opt-in to their digital communications. These decision-makers represent billions of dollars in purchasing power and are vested with the authority to buy sell, lease, invest, finance and develop income-producing real estate. MREJ is one of the leading metro area organizations offering continuing education to approximately 150-200 real estate development professionals, thereby commanding their attention and securing their presence at their events. The City of St. Cloud began a formal partnership with the MREJ in 2015. For key highlights of the endeavor see [Appendix A](#).

A continued partnership with the MREJ is recommended for 2016-17. The proposed sponsorship package includes:

- Sponsorship to the Minnesota Real Estate Journal Land Conference & Industrial Real Estate Conference (5 free passes to each conference, list of attendees from each conference, logo on signage at each conference and speaking opportunities on panels at conference). Value \$7,000.
- Title Sponsor to the St. Cloud Real Estate Conference that will be held in the Twin Cities. Value: \$9,500.
- Quarter Page Color ad in every issue of Minnesota Real Estate Journal (12 Insertions). Value: \$12,000.
- **Total Value of Partnership Package: \$28,500**

- **Budgeted Amount: \$15,000 (\$1,250 monthly for 12 months)**

While the 2016-17 package will be similar to the first package implemented in 2015, we recommend the following to enhance St. Cloud's presence in 2016:

- **Balance Between Digital & Print:** Pursue the 22,000 opt-in digital audience more aggressively in 2016 and establishing a more optimal balance between print and digital coverage.
 - Since the sponsorship cost won't likely change, we recommend scaling back the 12x print placement schedule to every other month, with the "off" months featuring digital coverage on the MREJ website (<http://www.rejournals.com/publications/minnesota-real-estate-journal/>). The current MN Real Estate Journal website doesn't appear to feature banner advertising. However, Agency 128 is still in negotiation with the MREJ in search of other digital options, including sponsorship/advertising in e-newsletters and other digital communications. See details under Paid Advertising/Creative Development below.
- **Quarterly St. Cloud Real Estate Update (Editorial Content):** To help layer the impact of branding efforts and to have a larger venue in which to describe St. Cloud's position as a viable business development locale, we recommend pursuing additional editorial opportunities within MREJ editorial content. MREJ leadership has expressed openness to increasing editorial content or coverage for St. Cloud. We recommend the development of a quarterly St. Cloud Real Estate Update, with bonus coverage as a click-through article online. Negotiations will be finalized upon approval of the plan and budget. See details and budget under Public Relations below.
- **E-Marketing & Social Media:** It is recommended that in-person contact be consistently followed with additional impressions that are memorable, captivating and leave a professional impression. To accomplish this, we recommend the following:
 - E-Marketing - Use the City's new eNewsletter (currently in development) to maintain contact on a monthly basis. See details and costs under Continuity Campaign below.
 - Social Media - Working with DAYTA Marketing, the EDA has done a good job of launching and maintaining social media channels for the St. Cloud > GREATER brand from a consumer perspective. However, there is some opportunity to improve reach to the business

audience, both locally and to the Twin Cities audience. See Social Media below for further details.

- **Greater St. Cloud Development Corporation (GSDC) Strategic Partnership**
Budget: \$0

While we were unable to secure a financial partnership with the GSDC in support of the MREJ sponsorship in 2015, it is strongly recommended that EDA continue efforts to collaborate with the GSDC when it makes sense and whenever possible. We share a common goal and interest in growing and sustaining our business community. United by this common bond, we continue to strongly recommend ongoing efforts to strengthen collaboration to support business locally and to establish a measurable presence in the Twin Cities metro area. We recommend restoring the EDA's presence on the GSDC Marketing Committee, for both relationship and trust building and to help both organizations discover ways to work together to serve the business development needs of the city and the region.

- **Local Media**

Since creating awareness of the St. Cloud GREATER brand locally cannot be a largely "paid" strategy due to budget constraints, support of the local media and relevant business/industry media is vital to ongoing growth and awareness of the St. Cloud GREATER brand. Media relationships that allow for regular published articles/stories and ongoing coverage can be developed, however, the City is not there yet. To get to that point, we recommend continued engagement of professional public relations support to nurture ongoing media relationships. However, it is strongly recommended that earned media be pursued and incorporated into branding efforts as a complementary, yet separate strategy from paid media efforts. Public relations and "earned media" coverage are distinctly different. With paid placements, we have purchased and paid for the media and have complete editorial control over its content. PR and earned media relates to coverage gained by non-paid efforts, by establishing relationships with media contacts and developing and pitching story ideas that provide mutual benefits to both the media (via providing content that is interesting and relevant to their readers) and to the City of St. Cloud (by supporting our overall awareness goals and strengthening your position as a go-to resource). See costs and details under Public Relations below.

- **Other Potential Partnership Opportunities**

Other partnerships that would be beneficial as time and budget allow include:

- MN Department of Employment & Economic Development (DEED)
- St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce – host Chamber Connection
- St. Cloud Area Visitors & Convention Bureau (CVB)

- St. Cloud Downtown Council
- Central MN Builders Association (CMBA)
- Central MN Manufacturers Association (CMMA)
- MN Commercial Assn. of Realtors (MNCAR) – St. Cloud & Twin Cities Chapters
- Local businesses
- Broker/RE Development market – fully leveraging the tools available through the City's association memberships

2. Website Enhancement

Budget: \$1,430

Aside from turning to already-established relationships, web searches are the number one way influencers (especially regional audiences) seek information about potential development locations. The City upgraded their entire website in 2014/15, including the Economic Development pages. The new design is on-brand, is visually driven and much more engaging than the previous site. However, more can be done to engage users (business and consumer) and to help the site be a more useful and go-to resource for business and residential constituencies.

- Overall City Website Recommendations:

The site is now visually driven and captivating to users, using imagery to showcase some of the finest gems in St. Cloud. However, while the photos do tell part of the story, we can still do more to highlight the primary assets/attributes of the City that make us GREATER, through strategic use of words and factoids (keep them brief and positioned in attention-getting locations). See yesrichmondva.com or telecomcorridor.com for examples.

We also recommend that the City continue to pursue tracking down and pointing the stcloudgreater.com url to the site. Your current url – ci.stcloud.mn.us – is difficult to remember, is quite long and arbitrary, with elements that can easily be missed upon manual entry, creating dead ends as users try to find you. You have invested in the St. Cloud > GREATER brand and web searches are a primary way influencers find you.

Stcloudgreater.com is easy to remember, further emphasizes and promotes the brand and is a necessary complement to brand development.

Recommended action items:

- Integration of benefits/factoids into site imagery (done by City).
- Resolve stcloudgreater.com access issues.

- Economic Development Section

The Economic Development section of the website's content is one of the most important aspects of the City's economic development marketing. Web searches are the leading way our regional audience finds information about potential sites. Target audiences will often visit your website (sometimes multiple times) before they pick up the phone and call. For the City's economic development pages, from Jan 2015 – Jun 2015 as compared to the same timeframe in 2014 with the old site, the following observations have been made:

- Total visits in the timeframe are down year over year, but total actions (what people are doing; where they are going) are up substantially.
- Amount of time people are spending on the ED pages is almost double what they spent in 2014.
- Unique pageviews of the ED home page more than doubled over the same timeframe in 2014.
- There were no referrals from social media pages to the Economic Development pages during the timeframe. This is not to say that social media is not referring people to the site. Rather, it suggests they are not referring users to the Economic Development pages. We will recommend as part of the ED social media strategy and content plan that DAYTA begin using direct links to the EDA pages when it makes sense to do so.
- There are also no referred visits from the MREJ site. This suggests a need to increase our digital presence with them (see Strategic Partnerships section).
- Lack of referred visits also suggest consideration of examining digital opportunities with MNCAR, DEED and other important industry venues.
- Traffic from Minneapolis/St. Paul users is up by more than 8 percent.

Recommended strategies:

- Thorough review of the website's Economic Development section (approximately 13 pages) to assess how the pages can be improved to meet the needs of our influencer target audience. This could include informal surveys to a portion of the MREJ email list for direct feedback from end users of the site. This analysis will take approximately 3 hours.
- Implementing recommended changes: the number of hours will vary depending on the identified changes (such as writing web copy, etc.). Upon approval of the ED section analysis, Agency 128 will provide a detailed estimate. At this point, we estimate the numbers of hours to be about 10 hours.

- o Business related posts on social media begin directing to the ED pages directly, including content directed from the social media strategy.
- o Suggested Economic Development page enhancements / page additions (to be built by CivicPlus):
 - o Links to press articles / Media Center / News
 - o Leaderboard or banner ad (cycled throughout entire City site if possible)
 - o Recruitment toolkit for employers to market the community

3. Event Marketing

Budget: \$2,000

- MREJ Partnership (see Strategic Partnerships above)
Note: Feedback from the 2015 conference was favorable in every aspect, however, the only element receiving less than a 4 (out of 5) was the length of the event. This should be discussed when planning the 2016 event.
- Local & Regional Events
Host Chamber Connection 1-2 times per year
Chamber Connection is a high profile opportunity to get in front of business owners/operators to meet and greet and strengthen your position as a trusted, go-to resource for assisting business with growth needs.

4. Social Media

Budget: \$2,525

- **Social media B to B strategy development: \$510**
- **LinkedIn content plan: \$255**
- **Quarterly LinkedIn articles (4): \$1,760**
- Business Development Social Media Content Plan / Strategic Direction
Social media is currently one of the primary venues for marketing all aspects of the St. Cloud > GREATER brand. Today however, much of the City's content is most relevant to consumers, with some exposure to the local business community. But there is room for improvement in developing productive content that speaks to a broader business constituency and that provides the outreach needed to more fully engage our local business and Twin Cities target audiences.

While LinkedIn is not the only platform conducive to reaching a business audience, it is one of the most commonly used for this purpose. Currently, the St. Cloud > GREATER LinkedIn page has 64 followers. With a list of more than

400 contacts from MREJ lists alone, we believe engagement with St. Cloud > GREATER from a business-to-business perspective can be increased substantially, with more social activity dedicated to pursuing the EDA's strategic marketing goals. To help achieve the objectives laid out in this plan, we recommend having a specific strategy in place that first provides direction on how, where and with whom to build your presence on LinkedIn (and possibly other platforms), and secondly, guides the development of *productive content* about St. Cloud, positioned in a way that gets the attention of and speaks to the business owner or influencer of business growth decisions.

To illustrate an example of productive content versus passive content:

Passive content (talks about us; doesn't inspire action)

[Exciting news! St. Cloud was recently named to the Top 100 Best Places to Live and Launch a Business by Fortune Magazine.](#)

Productive content (talks about benefits to the reader; inspires action and makes reader want to find out more)

[Need more space? Want it at half price? St. Cloud has more than xx square feet available for your business right now, with more than a dozen resources to help you make it happen today and a vast supplier network practically in your backyard. Part of the reason why Fortune Magazine just recently named St. Cloud one of the Top 100 Best Places to Live and Launch a Business. Come see for yourself. \(Link to the EDA page.\)](#)

Budgeted amount:

- B to B strategy aimed at specifically reaching our target audience using a combination of both St. Cloud > GREATER LinkedIn profile and Cathy's personal LI profile
- LinkedIn content plan tied back to overall strategy & other PR efforts.
Budgeted amount: \$255
- Quarterly LinkedIn articles (4, 1-pagers) Agency 128 will create and provide to DAYTA to place on LinkedIn page. Budgeted amount: \$1,760.

5. Paid Advertising / Creative Development

Budget:

- **Creative Development: \$2,640**
- **Paid Placements: \$7,268**

While our budget cannot support sustained placements, we recommend a few targeted ad placements to support other efforts throughout the year.

Creative Development:

- Digital animated ad for MREJ, Finance & Commerce & City Website
 - Multiple sizes
- 1 ad concept for print – to be used in
 - Chamber Profile – ½ page
 - MREJ ¼ page
 - Finance & Commerce – ¼ page
- Full page advertorial for Business Central
- Media services for negotiations, buy & schedule creation

Budgeted amount: \$2,640

- Media Services: \$440
- Digital animated ad = \$550
- 1 ad concept for print = \$660
- Advertorial development: \$990

Recommended Placements:

- Business Central Magazine – Full page advertorial + web link (\$1,700)
- St. Cloud Chamber Profile – ½ page ad (\$1,000)
- MN Real Estate Journal - Quarter Page Color ad in every issue of Minnesota Real Estate Journal (12 Insertions) Value: \$12,000 (cost included in sponsorship)
- Finance & Commerce Magazine – quarterly ¼ page ad kit (\$1,142 per kit x 4 = \$4,568)
 - Includes: two ¼ page print placements (run within a 4wk period)
 - 1 banner or big box digital ad for 7 days on finance-commerce.com
 - Sponsor ad on 14 eblasts

Budgeted amount: \$7,268

6. Sales Tool Creative Development

Budget: \$ 770

To further impact brand awareness, it is important that all materials, including the materials used to communicate with prospective businesses be branded with the St. Cloud > GREATER branding. The City has made considerable progress in developing branded tools to support their operations. However, there are still some materials that need to be developed:

- Proposal Template Design
 - Cover + internal page template
 - Standard boilerplate copy for proposal introduction
 - Format TBD based on City needs

- o Printing (if needed) to be handled by the City

7. Public Relations / Earned Media

Budget: \$11,440

- **Public relations strategic plan \$3,960**
- **Quarterly public relations support \$1,320/quarter**
- **Quarterly MREJ St. Cloud Real Estate Summit editorial: \$550/quarter**

We recommend investing in a public relations strategy to engage local and regional media to cover St. Cloud > GREATER news and announcements. The following steps will create a foundation for your public relations strategy and begin to develop media relations. Public relations is an ongoing effort that will build upon itself over the course of many years. Developing relationships with editors, broadcasters and reporters is key to being featured in "earned media". It is more than drafting a story or a press release.

- Create a public relations 2016 strategic plan
 - o Identify news outlets and publications to target 5 hrs
 - o Develop media contact list and potential Newswire account 4 hrs.
 - o Addition of media contacts to e-newsletter distribution 1 hr.
 - o Creation of a media packet to send to media contacts 10 hrs.
 - o Template for press releases 2 hrs.
 - o Determine how to add news feed on the ED web site 2 hrs.
 - o Establish a media/content calendar of targeted publications 10 hrs.
- Quarterly Public Relations support (12 hrs. a quarter = \$1,320)
 - o Draft story pitches/editorials/press release quarterly based on e-newsletter content, content calendar and other key business updates
 - o Submit/pitch stories to targeted news and publication outlets based on story content
- Draft/manage quarterly St. Cloud Real Estate Updates for MREJ

Press releases/project announcements can be repurposed multiple times across the City website, case studies and social media. Additionally, over time (likely 2017) as we establish relationships, we will begin to seek radio spots, guest appearances and speaking engagements to promote the St. Cloud > GREATER stories.

8. Continuity Efforts

Budget: \$8,640

- **E-marketing \$660/quarter**
- **Brand Extensions/Promotional Items \$6,000**

It is recommended that in-person contact through the MREJ sponsorship and other EDA initiatives be consistently followed with additional impressions that

keep St. Cloud top-of-mind to our audience. To accomplish this, we recommend the following:

- E-Marketing - Use the City's new eNewsletter (currently in development) to maintain contact on a quarterly basis. The current list includes about 400 names; not including existing City contacts not included on MREJ conference lists. Quarterly eNews to MREJ and City prospect lists. (4 issues)
- Available property eblasts – through MNCAR's CDXMail (handled by City)
- Brand Extensions/Promotion Specialties - Specifics TBD based on City needs.

Approach, Recommended Strategies & Budget: Recruitment

Limited budgets largely preclude our ability to take on a comprehensive media effort to promote the "live here; work here" message to our recruitment audience. For that reason, it is recommended that the City take a much more targeted approach, identifying first and foremost where the most urgent needs lie and further defining and narrowing down specific target demographics for the priority groups we need to reach. This will allow us to focus dollars on specific efforts to reach those high priority segments within our audience profile.

Targeting limited dollars will require research into the detailed talent needs of the business community to gain the necessary background information to determine how to best approach meeting recruitment needs. Fortunately, businesses have already been asked to provide ongoing feedback in this regard and key partners in the community have been moving forward already to market the jobs that local businesses need to fill. The information we need to best engage City dollars to support recruitment is already available and reinventing the wheel to collect the specifics we need would be a redundant use of resources. We recommended collaborating with key community partners that have the information we need as the most important and necessary first step to understand and support the most pressing recruitment needs.

Recommended Strategies & Budget

1. Strategic Partnerships

- **Greater St. Cloud Development Corporation (GSDC) Strategic Partnership**

Collaborating with the GSDC in support of local business recruitment efforts is perhaps the most important partnership priority. The GSDC has a strategic priority - their Talent Initiative – specifically aimed at "facilitating collaboration between

businesses, education institutions, workforce development and the talent pool to address workforce related needs". As this initiative was being developed, the GSDC did the necessary legwork to research and define the situation as well as the challenges and opportunities ahead. They have already established connections with area higher learning institutions that can facilitate student and alumni outreach. And their JobSpot portal, an important tool for both employers and job seekers to market and view available jobs, is established. The EDA has been invited to be a part of the GSDC's Talent Corps. We strongly recommend the City's engagement in this effort in order to understand the areas of greatest need, further define target audiences and to take the lead in marketing the community to job seekers. While as part of the Talent Corps the City may be involved in a broader scope of issues related to talent development and employment, for the purposes of this marketing plan, the City's role will be to stay actively engaged in the specifics of the area's recruitment needs in order to help provide resources to broaden efforts to reach qualified candidates, identify opportunities where tools to market the community are needed and what types of tools and marketing support would be most useful to our businesses.

- **Education Resources - Recruitment Outreach**

- **Local College Alumni Offices:**

History shows that St. Cloud could do much a much better job at retaining students in the 20-24 age cohort, which is primarily composed of students at our area higher learning institutions. College students generally begin looking for jobs in their field of study and plan their first stop after college well before their senior year. So, we need to start early, long before students graduate. We recommend partnering with the Alumni Offices of area institutions and work to target juniors and seniors using:

- Social media
- Email marketing
- Potential direct mail or university mail stuffers
- Cooperative efforts in alumni office mailings

- **St. Cloud High School Alumni Offices:**

Research shows that almost half of students move back home after graduating from college. For this reason, targeting students who graduated from St. Cloud High Schools in the past 3-7 years but moved out of the area to attend college would be a viable target audience to promote moving back to our area to start their careers once they graduate. We recommend partnering with St. Cloud high school Alumni Offices to target alumni aged 20-25 who moved out of the area to attend college and will be graduating soon.

Suggested strategies include:

- o Social media
- o Email marketing
- o Potential direct mail or university mail stuffers
- o Cooperative efforts in alumni office mailings

2. Community Marketing Strategy & Materials Development

Budget: \$7,750

The GSDC's JobSpot and related marketing support are in place primarily to market the available jobs throughout the region. However, a key factor in any candidate's employment decision, especially those from outside the community, is the prospect of moving to and living in the community. Today, professional tools employers can use to market the community and the St. Cloud > GREATER brand (and what makes us greater) are missing. Although this should be confirmed with the findings from GSDC research, it is quite likely that our suggested recruitment target audience represents the best potential audience to help solve many of St. Cloud's recruitment challenges. Once the EDA has had a chance to engage in the GSDC Talent Corps, it can be better understood specifically what materials and support tools employers need and who specifically we need to create them for. In the meantime, the plan will earmark some dollars that we can dedicate to the development of tools to support recruitment efforts and, to the degree possible within our budget, promote St. Cloud > GREATER most effectively to the target audience.

Suggested strategies and budget considerations include:

- o Development of a more specific tactical plan and media strategy for recruitment once target audience specifics are either confirmed or further defined by EDA/GSDC collaborative efforts.
- o St. Cloud > GREATER recruitment marketing tool development
 - o Recruitment Brochure
- o Additional tools for employers*

Budgeted amount:

- o Tactical strategy development/media services: \$1,100
 - o Brochure development: \$1,650
 - o *Other toolkit deliverables: \$5,000
- Total: \$7,750

**A general, unspecified budget has been earmarked for recruitment marketing support until specific details of what is needed are determined.*

3. Recruitment Paid Advertising:

Budget: \$5,278

- **Creative development: \$1,100**
- **Placements: \$4,178**

Reminding St. Cloud students, both past and present, and commuters alike about the opportunities available and the gifts that St. Cloud offers for resident professionals to support their professional growth will require frequent repetition of this message, placed strategically in the local venues they frequent to make an impression on them as many times as possible. Because of the size of the audience, broad reach media is a perfect fit to reach a large number of people at a lower cost per impression. However, from a budgetary standpoint, establishing a presence substantial enough to make the impression we need in traditional media (i.e. radio or newspaper advertising) renders this media largely out of reach. There are newer, more non-traditional ways to more narrowly target our investment to reach specifically the audience we need.

Suggested strategies and budget considerations include:

- Students:
 - Social media advertising
 - On-campus advertising
 - Advertising in Downtown St. Cloud in areas frequented by students
- Commuters & Tourism Constituencies:
 - Outdoor advertising
 - Non-traditional out-of-home – i.e. hotel key cards, gas pump tops
 - Movie theater advertising
 - Creative development:
 - Size and media TBD – budget is ballpark for 1 concept
 - Includes media services for negotiations, buy & schedule creation
 - Budgeted amount: \$1,100
 - Recommended placements:
 - Specific placement TBD based on target demo needs \$3,000
 - St. Cloud Visitors Guide – ½-page ad \$1,178

- ***Social Media & Recruitment Content Plan Development***

Budget:

- **Content plan development: \$255**
- **Monthly Program & Advertising (DAYTA): \$650/month = \$7,800**

As avid users of the medium, social media will play a primary role in reaching our recruitment audience. The City has contracted with DAYTA Marketing to manage and implement the social media program, which is primarily focused on Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter activity. Current cost is \$599 per month. As part of their current plan, we recommend incorporating consumer-directed content that supports our recruitment objective. To provide direction for doing so, we recommend a content plan be developed to specifically build your following of young adults/college students in our target demographic and then position content that speaks to key messaging in our recruitment strategy in creative ways that attract the attention of this savvy audience. This would include specific follower goals from this demo.

Suggested strategies and budget considerations include:

- Recruitment content plan – to include recommendations on boosts to college & high school alumni audiences
- Social media advertising (DAYTA)
- Social media program implementation (DAYTA)

Appendix A: Key Highlights of 2015 MREJ Partnership

The City of St. Cloud began a formal partnership with the MREJ in 2015. Key highlights of the endeavor include:

- i. Hosting the 1st Annual St. Cloud Real Estate Development Summit – Held in May 2015, this first-of-its-kind event for St. Cloud put the EDA and some of the City’s key influencers in front dozens of influencers in our target audience.
 - o Two thirds or 32 were from outside the St. Cloud area
 - o One third or 14 were influencers from the St. Cloud area
 - o Half of the attendees from outside St. Cloud attendees represented the top 10 metro area C/I broker/site selector/developers:
 - JLL
 - CSM
 - Oppidan
 - Ryan Cos.
 - Marcus & Millichap
 - McGough
 - Liberty Property Trust
 - CBRE
 - Gaughan Cos
 - Shingobee Builders
- ii. Sponsorship of the Minnesota Real Estate Journal Land Conference & Industrial Real Estate Conference, where St. Cloud Economic Development Director, Cathy Mehelich, was one of the hosted speakers on panels at these conferences.
- iii. Quarter page color ad in every issue of Minnesota Real Estate Journal (12 Insertions).
- iv. In all, as a result of the MREJ sponsorship and the targeted focus on getting the EDA personally in front of key influencers in our target audience, the City now has more than 400 direct contacts that we will continue to build relationships with and stay in touch with.
- v. Because business development is a relationship endeavor, the most effective opportunities are those that continue to get the City’s Economic Development Team in front of the dealer/broker/site selector audience both 1:1 and by way of speaking engagements to establish trust, credibility, and educate them on the true potential in St. Cloud. The exposure to this group needs to take place consistently over time.
- vi. 6x banner advertising in MREJ eblasts

Appendix B: 2014-15 Economic Development Activity

Total Inquiries:

2015 = totals pending
2014 = 135
2013 = 65
2011-12 (18month start-up) = 54

Inquiry Medium – 2014

Phone – 58
Email – 55
Meetings – 22

Inquiry Type - 2014:

Warehouse/Distribution – 15
Call Center/Office – 6
Manufacturing – 24
Downtown 27
Redevelopment 6

Origination of Inquiry - 2014

DEED/GSDC – 12
Greater MSP - 4
MNCAR/brokers – 55
Local "4-square" network -Bankers, Builders, Businesses, Brokers – 41
Business Retention Expansions (BRE) visits – 8

Leads Developed & Pursued (more than one meeting/site visit/proposal submittal) – 16

Closed Leads in St. Cloud (with or without EDA financial assistance) – 8

- *Park Industries
- *Alpine Cabinets
- *Grede Foundry
- *Dubow
- *The Lofts
- *Distrib/Warehouse (in process in St. Joseph)
- *Leafline Labs
- *Capital One

Objective 1: Local & Regional Business Development			
Marketing Strategy	Marketing Tactic	Budget	Notes
MREJ Sponsorship to build relationships in the Twin Cities real estate community	MREJ Event Sponsorship	\$15,000	
Event Marketing to raise awareness & establish credibility & trust amongst target audience	Host Chamber Connection 1-2 times a year	\$2,000	
Content Delivery - Maximize web presence to make a compelling first impression for web searchers; Tell the "why" about St. Cloud > GREATER	City of St. Cloud Web Enhancements ED Web pages audit and messaging recommendation	\$1,430	City to manage web updates, Agency 128 provide content
Thought Leadership to provide strategic direction for purposeful and hard working content for business development	Social media B to B strategy & content plan LinkedIn Business Articles (1 per quarter)	\$2,525	
Creative Development: *Ad & Editorial Development to educate on benefits of St. Cloud and reinforce St. Cloud > GREATER key messages *Sales tool for branding consistency in all communications	*1 Digital ad concept for MREJ, Finance & Commerce and City web site (multiple sizes) *1 print ad concept for 1/4 page ad in MREJ pub, 1/2 page in Chamber Profile & 1/4 page ad in Finance & Commerce *Full page advertorial in Business Central Magazine *Branded proposal template (cover & interior page), intro copy	\$3,410	Includes media services, negotiations, buy, schedule creation and submissions and account management
Advertising & Editorial Placement PAID MEDIA	*Business Central full page advertorial + Web link *St Cloud Chamber Profile 1/2 page ad *MREJ 1/2 page monthly (digital tbd) *Finance & Commerce - quarterly = 1/4 page print, 1 web banner ad; 1 eblast sponsor ad (see strategy for details)	\$7,268	

Public relations strategy to develop media relationships, increase editorial exposure for the City and St. Cloud GREATER. EARNED MEDIA	*2016 public relations strategy development *Monthly plan implementation/PR support *Quarterly St. Cloud real estate update for MREJ publication	\$11,440	
Continuity Efforts to supplement in-person contact and keep St. Cloud top of mind	*Quarterly St. Cloud e-newsletter *Brand extensions / promotion specialties	\$8,640	
	Total	\$51,713.00	
Objective 2: Recruitment Support			
Marketing Strategy	Marketing Tactic	Budget	Notes
Strategy & Creative Development *Recruitment strategy & tool creation to market the community and support employer recruiting efforts	*Recruitment strategy development *Brochure/sales tool develop creative development *Other toolkit/support deliverables (TBD) *Recruitment Ad development (1 concept)	\$8,850	Printing costs, if any, to be covered separately by City and/or employers
*Content plan for 2016 to guide social media content and direct purposeful content that directly supports City marketing strategic goals and is consistent with other marketing initiatives *Plan implementation by DAYTA Marketing to connect with employees & residents	*Content plan development/Guide for Dayta *Monthly program implementation (\$650/month)	\$8,055	
Recruitment Paid Advertising	*St. Cloud Visitors Guide 1/2 page color ad *Other placements as appropriate based on target demo needs	\$4,178	Dayta to create posts based off of content calendar that is provided by Agency 128
	Total	\$21,083.00	
Total Economic Development Proposed Budget:		\$72,796	